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Yellowstone flooding rebuild could take years, cost billions

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

Created in 1872 as the United States was recovering from the Civil War, Yellowstone was the first of the national parks that came to be referred to as America's best idea. Now, the home to gushing geysers, thundering waterfalls and some of the country's most plentiful and diverse wildlife is facing its biggest challenge in decades.

Floodwaters this week wiped out numerous bridges, washed out miles of roads and closed the park as it approached peak tourist season during its 150th anniversary celebration. Nearby communities were swamped and hundreds of homes flooded as the Yellowstone River and its tributaries raged.

The scope of the damage is still being tallied by Yellowstone officials, but based on other national park disasters, it could take years and cost upwards of \$1 billion to rebuild in an environmentally sensitive landscape where construction season only runs



The entrance to Yellowstone National Park, a major tourist attraction, sits closed due to the historic floodwaters on June 15, 2022, in Gardiner, Mont.

Associated Press

from the spring thaw until the first snowfall.

Based on what park officials have revealed and Associated Press images and video taken from a

helicopter, the greatest damage seemed to be to roads, particularly on the highway connecting the park's north entrance in Gardiner, Montana, to the

park's offices in Mammoth Hot Springs. Large sections of the road were undercut and washed away as the Gardner River jumped its banks. Perhaps hundreds

of footbridges on trails may have been damaged or destroyed.

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Yellowstone flooding rebuild could take years, cost billions

Continued from Front

"This is not going to be an easy rebuild," Superintendent Cam Sholly said early in the week as he highlighted photos of massive gaps of roadway in the steep canyon. "I don't think it's going to be smart to invest potentially, you know, tens of millions of dollars, or however much it is, into repairing a road that may be subject to seeing a similar flooding event in the future."

Re-establishing a human imprint in a national park is always a delicate operation, especially as a changing climate makes natural disasters more likely. Increasingly intense wildfires are occurring, including one last year that destroyed bridges, cabins and other infrastructure in Lassen Volcanic National Park in Northern California. Flooding has already done extensive damage in other parks and is a threat to virtually all the more-than 400 national parks, a report by The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization found in 2009.

Mount Rainier National Park in Washington state closed for six months after the worst flooding in its history in 2006. Damage to roads, trails, campgrounds and buildings was estimated at \$36 million.

Yosemite Valley in California's Yosemite National Park has flooded several times, but suffered its worst damage 25 years ago when heavy downpours on top of a large snowpack — a scenario similar to the Yellowstone flood — submerged campgrounds, flooded hotel rooms, washed out bridges and sections of road, and knocked out power and sewer lines. The park was



In this photo provided by the National Park Service, is a washed out bridge from flooding at Rescue Creek in Yellowstone National Park, Mont., on June 13, 2022.

Associated Press

closed for more than two months. Congress allocated \$178 million in emergency funds — a massive sum for park infrastructure at the time — and additional funding eventually surpassed \$250 million, according to a 2013 report.

But the rebuilding effort once estimated to last four to five years dragged out for 15, due in part to environmental lawsuits over a protected river corridor and a long bureaucratic planning and review process.

It's not clear if Yellowstone would face the same obstacles, though reconstructing the road that runs near Mammoth Hot Springs, where steaming water bubbles up over an otherworldly series of stone terraces, presents a challenge.

It's created by a unique natural formation of underground tubes and vents that push the hot water to the surface, and would be just one of many natural

wonders crews would have to be careful not to disturb, said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Along with the formation itself, there are also microbes and insects that thrive in the environment found almost nowhere else. And the park will need to avoid damaging any archaeological or cultural artifacts in the area with a rich Native American history.

"They'll have to look at all the resources the park is designed to protect, and try to do this project as carefully as possible, but they're also going to try to go fairly quickly," Hartl said. Having to reroute the roadway that hugged the Gardner River could be an opportunity to better protect the waterway and the fish and other species that thrive there from oil and other microscopic pollution that comes from passing vehicles, Hartl said.

"The river will be healthier

for it," he said.

The Yosemite flood was seen by the park as an opportunity to rethink its planning and not necessarily rebuild in the same places, said Frank Dean, president and chief executive of the Yosemite Conservancy and a former park ranger. Some facilities were relocated outside the flood plain and some campgrounds that had been submerged in the flood were never restored. At Yosemite Lodge, cabins that had been slated for removal in the 1980s were swamped and had to be removed.

"The flood took them all out like a precision strike," Dean said. "I'm not going to say it's a good thing, but providence came in and made the decision for them."

Yellowstone's recovery comes as a rapidly growing number of people line up to visit the country's national parks, even as a backlog of deferred maintenance budget grows into tens of billions of dollars. The park was already due for funding from the Great American Outdoors Act, a 2020 law passed by Congress that authorizes nearly \$3 billion for maintenance and other projects on public lands. National parks and other public lands will receive a similar amount

yearly for five years.

Now it will need another infusion of money for more pressing repairs that Emily Douce, director of operations and park funding at National Parks Conservation Association, estimated could hit at least \$1 billion. The southern half of the park is expected to reopen next week, allowing visitors to flock to Old Faithful, the rainbow colored Grand Prismatic Spring, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and its majestic waterfall.

But the flood-damaged northern end may not reopen this year, depriving visitors from seeing Tower Fall and Lamar Valley, one of the best places in the world to see wolves and grizzly bears. Some days during the high season, an animal sighting can lead to thousands of people parked on the side of the road hoping to catch a glimpse.

Whether some of these areas are reopened will depend on how quickly washed-out roads can be repaired, downed trees can be removed and mudslides cleared.

Maintaining the approximately 466 miles (750 kilometers) of roadway throughout the park is a major job. Much of the roadway originally was designed for stagecoaches, said Kristen Brengel, senior vice-president of public affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association.

"Part of the effort of the last couple of decades has been to stabilize the road to make it safe for heavier vehicles to travel on it," she said. Located at a high elevation where snow and cold weather is not uncommon eight months of the year and there are many tiny earthquakes, road surfaces don't last as long and road crews have a short window to complete projects. One recently completed road job created closures for about two years.

"I think it'll probably be several years before the park is totally back to normal," Hartl said. □

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Most land mine use by U.S. military banned, except for Korea

By CHRIS MEGERIAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration announced Tuesday that it would restrict the use of anti-personnel land mines by the U.S. military, aligning the country's policy more closely with an international treaty banning the deadly explosives. "The president believes strongly that we need to curtail their use worldwide," John Kirby, a national security spokesman, said at a White House briefing.

The United States has not extensively deployed the mines since the Gulf War in 1991. But the announcement represents a shift from a more permissive stance under then-President Donald Trump, and it concludes a review that has lasted for more than a year.

Bonnie Jenkins, the State Department's undersecretary for arms control and international security, said the new policy fulfills "a commitment that President Biden made as a candidate," when he described Trump's decision as "reckless."

Anti-personnel land mines are buried underground or scattered on the surface, and they can pose a lethal threat to civilians long after combat has ended. Russia has reportedly used the explosives during its invasion of Ukraine.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., described the White House announcement as a "long overdue recognition that the grave humanitarian and political costs of using these weapons far exceed their limited military utility."

"As welcome as this step is, the White House needs to put the U.S. on a definitive path to join the treaties banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions," he said in a statement. "Neither of these indiscriminate weapons, the horrific consequences of which we are seeing in Ukraine today, belong in the arsenals of civilized nations."

Under the new policy, the U.S. will restrict the use of these explosives outside of



In this Aug. 1, 2010 file photo, South Korean Army soldiers search for landmines near the demilitarized zone that separates the two Koreas in Yeoncheon, north of Seoul, South Korea.

Associated Press

its efforts to help defend South Korea from a potential North Korean invasion. Although the U.S. does not currently have any minefields deployed there, Washington has pledged support for Seoul's defense, which includes anti-personnel mines.

The U.S. has a stockpile of 3 million anti-personnel land mines. Under the new policy, any that aren't needed to protect South Korea will be destroyed. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a question about whether any will be discarded.

The exception regarding the Korean Peninsula, which was also in place during President Barack Obama's administration, leaves the U.S. short of full compliance with the Ottawa Convention, the 1997 treaty intended to eliminate anti-personnel land mines.

Russia is not a signatory to the treaty either, and Human Rights Watch said it has documented Moscow's use of mines during its invasion of Ukraine.

Alicia Arango Olmos, Colombia's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva and a top official in the global campaign against the use of land mines, has urged Russia to stop deploying them. "Anti-personnel mines only cause victims, they don't resolve any type of problem," she said in April.

Her office praised the U.S. announcement on Tuesday.

"We welcome this timely decision and thank the United States for your com-

mitment with the principles of the (Ottawa) Convention," the office tweeted. "We need to continue our clearance efforts all around the world until we reach a #MineFreeWorld."

U.S. officials said that the Pentagon was working on alternatives to land mines on the Korean peninsula, but did not detail what those might be.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said the administration "needs to have a better answer about when those alternatives will be developed, rather than just kicking this down the road."

He said the U.S. should continue working to completely comply with the Ottawa Convention. □

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IRS erases last season's backlog, but still faces 2022 crush

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Internal Revenue Service said Tuesday that it will have erased its backlog of last season's tax returns by the end of this week.

And with 143 million returns from this year's tax season processed so far, agency officials say there's a greater likelihood of being caught up on processing all returns by the end of this year.

The agency has faced a well-publicized backlog of tens of millions of tax returns and clogged customer service phone systems, which leaders have attributed to decades of underfunding and antiquated internal computer systems.

"To date, more than twice as many returns await processing compared to a typical year at this point in the calendar year, although the IRS has worked through almost a million more returns to date than it had at this time last year," the agency said in statement Tuesday.

Administering pandemic-



A portion of the 1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return form is shown July 24, 2018, in New York. **Associated Press**

related programs — including stimulus checks and advanced Child Tax Credit payments — imposed a new workload on the agency over the past two years.

That's on top of an IRS workforce that is the same size it was in 1970, though the U.S. population has grown exponentially and the U.S. tax code has become increasingly complicated.

A Treasury official, briefing

reporters on condition of anonymity, said agency employees have worked 500,000 overtime hours to bring down the backlog.

Agency officials have been asking Congress for increased funding for the agency.

During the 2020 budget year, the IRS processed more than 240 million tax returns and issued roughly \$736 billion in refunds, including \$268 billion in stimu-

lus payments, according to the latest IRS data.

In that same time frame, 59.5 million people called or visited an IRS office.

In a joint letter addressed to Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who heads the Senate Finance Committee, Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo and IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig said Tuesday that the agency has provided over \$298 billion in refunds to Americans

this year, and electronic returns without errors have been processed within 8 to 21 days.

"Despite this progress, there are real challenges ahead," the letter said. "Because the IRS entered this filing season with a significant backlog, millions of paper returns received in 2022 have not yet been processed."

The agency has been working to catch up to the ever-mounting pile of work. The agency entered this year's tax filing season with 8 million unprocessed returns from 2021, and by the end of this week will have polished off the last of those that didn't contain taxpayer errors, it says.

Last week, the agency unveiled voice bots to help eligible taxpayers easily verify their identity to set up or modify a payment plan while avoiding long wait times.

And in March, the agency announced plans to hire 10,000 new workers. Thus far 1,500 new workers have been hired, according to Treasury. □



Arati Prabhakar, left, the director of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency speaks after introducing then-Defense Secretary Ash Carter to speak Sept. 9, 2015, at the opening of the DARPA conference at the America's Center in St. Louis. President Joe Biden has chosen Arati Prabhakar to be his science adviser. Associated Press

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden nominated the former head of two federal science and engineering agencies to be his science adviser, who if confirmed by the Senate, will be the first woman, person of color and immigrant to hold that Cabinet-level position.

Biden nominated engineer

and physicist Arati Prabhakar, who during the Obama administration directed the James Bond-like Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) which came up with the Internet and stealth aircraft, to the science adviser job, which also includes running the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Prabhakar helped kick-start work in DARPA

Biden picks first woman, person of color as science adviser

that eventually led to the type of RNA vaccine used to develop shots for COVID-19. In the 1990s, starting at the age of 34, she was the first woman and youngest person to run the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Prabhakar would take over after Biden's initial science adviser, Eric Lander, resigned when a White House investigation found he bullied staff members amid complaints about how he treated co-workers. It was the first such resignation of the Biden administration. Lander had previously been criticized for downplaying the contributions of women in science. He would be replaced by Prabhakar, who was also the first woman to earn a doctorate in applied physics from Caltech, after getting a master's and bach-

elor's degree in electrical engineering.

"She clearly is very smart, articulate, a visionary who makes things happen," said Trump science adviser Kelvin Droegenmeier, who said he didn't know her personally but heard a talk of hers at the National Academy of Sciences "and was quite frankly blown away." Droegenmeier said Prabhakar's "first and most important role is to restore trust and integrity at OSTP, which I have no doubt she can do." In nominating her, Biden called Prabhakar "a brilliant and highly respected engineer and applied physicist" who will help use science and technology to "solve our toughest challenges and make the impossible possible." The job includes dealing with climate change, public health, defense, energy

and technology issues.

Sudip Parikh, chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the largest general science society, highlighted Prabhakar's work at DARPA as something that "led to pioneering work on RNA technology underlying COVID-19 vaccines."

Prabhakar immigrated to Chicago and then Texas with her family from New Delhi, India, when she was 3. After getting her PhD, Prabhakar worked for DARPA, later becoming the first person to run its microelectronics office. She then ran NIST, which deals in engineering standards. In between government gigs, she worked in Silicon Valley as an executive and venture capitalist and in 2019 she founded the research non-profit Actuate. □

U.S., Iran in tense sea incident; Tehran preps new centrifuges

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A U.S. Navy warship fired a warning flare to wave off an Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboat coming straight at it during a tense encounter in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, officials said Tuesday.

The incident on Monday involving the Guard and the Navy comes as tensions remain high over stalled negotiations over Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers and as Tehran enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels under decreasing international oversight.

Meanwhile, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog said Iran now plans to enrich uranium through a second set of advanced centrifuges at its underground Fordo facility amid the standoff.

The Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Sirocco and Spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport USNS Choctaw County found themselves in the close encounter with three Iranian fast boats while coming through the Strait of Hormuz to enter the Persian Gulf,



In this photo made available by the U.S. Navy, a boat of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) operates in close proximity to patrol coastal ship USS Sirocco (PC 6) and expeditionary fast transport USNS Choctaw County (T-EPF 2) in the Strait of Hormuz, Monday, June 20, 2022.

the Navy said.

In a video released by the Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, a high-speed Guard Boghammar is seen turning head-on toward the Sirocco. The Sirocco repeatedly blows its horn at the Boghammar, which turns away as it closes in. The flare shot can be heard, but not seen, as the Boghammar passes the Sirocco with the Iranian flag flying above it. The Navy said the Bogham-

mar came within 50 yards (45 meters) of the Sirocco, raising the risk of the vessels running into each other. The overall encounter lasted about an hour, the Navy said.

The Guard's "actions did not meet international standards of professional or safe maritime behavior, increasing the risk of miscalculation and collision," the Navy said.

Iran did not immediately

acknowledge the incident in the strategic waterway a fifth of all traded oil passes through the strait.

The Navy separately told The Associated Press that this marked the second so-called "unsafe and unprofessional" incident it had with Iran in recent months.

On March 4, three Guard ships had a tense encounter for over two hours with Navy and U.S. Coast Guard vessels as they traveled out

of the Persian Gulf through the strait, the Navy said. In that incident, the Guard's catamaran Shahid Nazeri came within 25 yards (22 meters) of the USCGC Robert Goldman, the Navy said. "The two U.S. Coast Guard cutters issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and deployed warning flares," the Navy said.

The Navy did not elaborate on why it did not announce the previous incident, particularly since a larger vessel came even closer to an American warship. However, that was just as a deal in Vienna between Iran and world powers on restoring the nuclear deal looked possible, before the talks broke down.

Iran and world powers agreed in 2015 to the nuclear deal, which saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord, raising tensions across the wider Middle East and sparking a series of attacks and incidents.

Talks in Vienna about reviving the deal have been on a "pause" since March. □

Associated Press

Google exec to UN: Ukraine 'a crystal ball' for info warfare

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A Google executive warned the U.N. Security Council Tuesday that cyberattacks, disinformation and other forms of information warfare being waged in Ukraine are a "crystal ball" for future problems elsewhere.

"States must find a way to turn the volume down and settle on some kind of deterrence doctrine for the cyber domain," Jared Cohen said at a council meeting on hate speech, incitement and atrocities in Ukraine.

He argued that while tech companies have needed expertise, "there is no magical algorithm or single fix for this," and finding a solution

will take a lot of experimentation.

Cohen heads Jigsaw, a part of Google that aims to

build technology to combat disinformation, censorship and extremism online.

He said Ukraine "has been

disproportionately targeted" by advanced cyberattacks since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, adding: "It is essentially our crystal ball for what is likely to come."

The war in Ukraine upped pressure on tech companies to work harder to combat hate speech, disinformation and other harmful content online. The European Union is working on sweeping new rules that would require Google, Facebook parent Meta and other tech giants to police their platforms more strictly.

Western powers on the Security Council have accused Russia of a campaign of propaganda,

disinformation and hate directed at undermining Ukraine. A recent report from Mandiant, a cyber security firm, found that Russia used disinformation, fear and propaganda to demoralize Ukraine and divide its allies.

"Hate speech can also be a war crime," British deputy U.N. Ambassador James Kariuki said Tuesday, calling on Russia to "stop making such statements."

Russian Ambassador Vasily Nebenzia repeated his country's counterclaims that Ukrainian authorities' rhetoric has poisoned citizens against Russia and Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine, with Western encouragement. □



Jared Cohen, founder and CEO of Jigsaw at Alphabet Inc and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, speaks during a meeting of the U.N. Security Council on maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine, Tuesday, June 21, 2022, at United Nations headquarters.

Associated Press

Dozens dead, thousands homeless in Bangladesh, India floods

By **AL-EMRUN GARJON and ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL**
Associated Press

SYLHET, Bangladesh (AP)

— Villagers in northeastern Bangladesh crowded makeshift refugee centers and scrambled to meet boats arriving with food and fresh water as massive floods, which have killed dozens of people and displaced hundreds of thousands there and in neighboring India, continued to wreak havoc Tuesday.

In Sylhet, one of the worst-hit areas in the extreme northeast of the country near the border with India, villagers waded, swam and paddled makeshift rafts or small skiffs to a boat delivering aid that had moored to one shelter, its ground floor covered half way to the ceiling with water.

The low-lying village along the Surma River is prone to flooding, but with the extreme rainfall at the start of this year's monsoon season, villager Mehedi Hasan Parvez said he's never seen anything this bad.

"In some cases even the second story of buildings has been inundated," the local businessman said, sitting in a small boat as he waited his turn to receive a package of rice, canned goods and other staples.



A flood affected family waits for the help at marooned Tarabari village, west of Gauhati, in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, Monday, June 20, 2022.

"Some people have been without water at home for three days," he said. "They have no food at home and can't get to the market to buy supplies."

Monsoon rains in South Asia typically begin in June. But this year heavy downpours lashed northeastern India and Bangladesh as early as March, triggering floods as early as April in Bangladesh. With rising global temperatures due to climate change, experts say the monsoon is becoming

more variable, meaning that much of the rain that would typically fall in a season is arriving in a shorter period.

Meghalaya, the mountainous region of India to the north of Sylhet, and neighboring Assam state, renowned for its tea plantations, have seen far more rain in June than usual.

In the settlements of Mawsynram and Cherrapunji, some of the world's wettest areas on the southern fringes of Meghalaya

state that overlook Bangladesh's plains, more than 970 millimeters (38 inches) of rain was recorded on Sunday alone, according to India's Meteorological Department.

Meghalaya has already received 174% of its total average June rainfall over the first three weeks of the month.

Assam is at 97% of its average for the month over the same period.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina surveyed

many of the flooded areas by helicopter on Tuesday and urged regional leaders to speed up relief efforts at a meeting with them.

So far, reports of fatalities in Bangladesh range between 12 and 32, but the U.N. children's agency said about 4 million people have been cut off by the floods in the country's northeast and are in urgent need of help.

UNICEF said in a report Monday that they include 1.6 million children and that without fresh drinking water, they could be in serious danger of waterborne diseases.

In the Sylhet region, 90% of health facilities have been flooded and thousands of people have taken refuge in overcrowded shelters, the agency said.

At one makeshift shelter, a village woman shared a small room with more than a half dozen others and two of her family's cattle, saying she had been left with little choice.

On the other side of the mountain range to the north of Sylhet in India's Assam state, the torrential rains sent the Brahmaputra River spilling over its banks in many areas, causing destruction and triggering massive landslides. □

Associated Press

E.U. calls on Ethiopia to reconnect Tigray region to the world

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP)

— The European Union says Ethiopia's government must reconnect its northern Tigray region to the world as a yearlong partial blockade has left food aid for almost 1 million hungry people stuck in warehouses without the fuel to deliver it. Janez Lenarcic, the EU commissioner for crisis management, told reporters on Tuesday that the recent increase in aid convoys arriving in Tigray was a positive development but added that "more needs to be done" before the EU normalizes relations with Africa's second-most populous country with 115 million people.

"I do not see the rationale for keeping the blockade of banking services, electricity and telecommunications in place," Lenarcic said, adding that the "partial blockade" of the Tigray region is hampering humanitarian efforts while 5.2 million people need aid after 19 months of conflict. Tigray has been mostly cut off from the rest of Ethiopia after Tigray forces re-captured the regional capital a year ago and federal forces withdrew. A truce declared by the government in March has led to a significant increase in aid reaching Tigray by road after months of deprivation. Lenarcic called on Ethio-

pia's government to lift restrictions on fuel and cash entering Tigray and said "monitoring mechanisms" could be put in place to allay government fears that Tigray forces might divert fuel for military purposes.

The United Nations this month said enough food to feed 950,000 people is currently stuck in warehouses in the regional capital, Mekele, because there is not enough fuel to distribute it within Tigray after several fuel tankers were refused access to the region.

"We have a situation where the warehouses are full, but the aid cannot get out into the countryside where needs are highest,"

Lenarcic said, and noted that many people in Tigray depend entirely on such

aid because they cannot access money in their bank accounts. □



An Ethiopian woman argues with others over the allocation of yellow split peas after it was distributed by the Relief Society of Tigray in the town of Agula, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia on May 8, 2021.

Associated Press

Lapid, set to be Israel's next premier, faces critical test

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In a 10-year political career, Israel's Yair Lapid has transformed himself from an upstart political novice to a feisty opposition leader to the savvy operator who toppled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Next week, he is expected to assume his biggest role yet as the new prime minister.

Following the government's decision to dissolve parliament, Lapid, now foreign minister, is set to take office as caretaker prime minister until elections in the fall. It will be a critical test for Lapid, 58, who will try to convince Israelis he is worthy of the top office as he takes on a resurgent Netanyahu.

"A year ago, we started the process of rebuilding, and now: we're carrying it on, and carrying it on together," Lapid declared late Monday as he stood alongside his main coalition partner, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Officially, the two men were announcing the end of their year-old government an alliance of eight diverse parties that was severely weakened by months of infighting and rebellion. But in many ways, Lapid sounded like he was beginning his next campaign.

"Even if we are going to elections in a few months, the challenges we face will not wait," he said, pointing to Israel's high cost of living and security challenges in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

In a swipe at Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, he vowed to "stand against the forces threatening to turn Israel into a nondemocratic country." Netanyahu, believing he is the victim of a political witch hunt, has made clear he intends to take on the country's legal and law-enforcement establishment if he returns to power.

A former author, columnist, news anchor, bank pitchman and amateur boxer, Lapid left a successful career as a media personality to enter politics in 2012

as head of a new centrist party popular with middle-class Israelis.

Yesh Atid dropped to 11 seats in the 2015 elections. Lapid found himself in the

situation for the first time in 12 years.

Although Lapid was the

member.

The coming months present great risk and great opportunity.

Once again, Netanyahu's Likud party appears to be the front-runner. And once again, Netanyahu's leadership style and legal woes are likely to be high on voters' minds.

While Lapid is sure to face relentless attacks from Netanyahu, who has tried to portray him as a lightweight who betrayed Israel's security by allying with an Arab faction, he will do so from the perch of the prime minister's office.

After serving as foreign minister for the past year, he will have even more opportunities to strengthen his international standing. He is set to host President Joe Biden on a visit next month and will have the opportunity to speak at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Lapid spoke to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday to prepare for Biden's visit, the Foreign Ministry said.

"The visit will have significant implications for the region and the fight against Iran, as well as immense potential to significantly improve regional stability and security," it said.

As caretaker prime minister, he is unlikely to launch any major military operations or bold peace initiatives with the Palestinians. If Lapid can keep things quiet and avoid controversy, he could be well-positioned for the next election.

"Lapid has to work now at looking prime ministerial," wrote Anshel Pfeffer, a columnist at the Haaretz daily. "His new post, from next week on, as interim prime minister is his greatest asset going into the election." □



Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid speaks during a joint statement with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in Jerusalem, Monday, June 20, 2022.

Associated Press

He promised economic relief, an end to controversial draft exemptions for seminary students and a more moderate approach to the Palestinians.

Unlike the right-wing parties that dominate Israel's political system, Lapid favors peace talks leading to an eventual two-state solution with the Palestinians, although it's unclear if he will ever have the kind of mandate needed to engage in such a process.

In 2013, he led his new Yesh Atid party to a surprisingly strong showing in parliamentary elections. Yesh Atid finished as the second-largest party, with 19 seats in the 120-member parliament.

Lapid became finance minister, a difficult and often thankless task. While marking some successes, his key promises of lowering the cost of living and bringing down housing prices failed to materialize. Netanyahu eventually fired him for insubordination.

opposition and appeared to be on the way to becoming the latest in a long line of centrist politicians to flame out after early success.

But Lapid managed to reinvent himself. He formed an alliance with former military chief Benny Gantz that came close to toppling Likud in three consecutive elections.

Those elections, focused on Netanyahu's divisive personality and fitness to rule, all ended inconclusively. Moving to end the deadlock, Gantz briefly joined forces with Netanyahu in 2020 leaving Lapid as opposition leader and a vocal government critic.

When the country went back to the polls in early 2021, Yesh Atid once again surged and emerged as the second-largest party in parliament.

In a stroke of creative diplomacy and political savvy, Lapid cobbled together a new coalition that pushed Netanyahu into the oppo-

mastermind of the alliance, he cemented the deal by agreeing to rotate the job of prime minister with Bennett a move that was seen by many as selfless and statesmanlike. Lapid took on the post of foreign minister.

The coalition members spanned the Israeli political spectrum, with little binding them together beyond opposition to Netanyahu. The government made history by being the first to include an Arab party.

The coalition got off to a strong start passing the first national budget in several years, navigating a pair of coronavirus waves and improving relations with the U.S. and Arab allies.

Ultimately, ideological differences caused it to unravel.

Parliament is expected to dissolve itself in a series of votes over the coming days. Once that happens, Lapid takes over as caretaker prime minister until elections in October or No-



Infini by Chef Urvin Croes



PALM BEACH — After spearheading *The Kitchen Table* for five years, receiving notable recognitions in *USA Today*, *The Daily Meal* and earning the #1 spot on *TripAdvisor's* list of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Caribbean, Chef Urvin Croes has now moved on to higher heights. *Infini*, his new chef's table, which opened at the Blue Residences in 2020, allows the Michelin-trained Aruban culinary artist to create gastronomic experiences unconfined by cultural or regional expectations. Croes says: "We opened up the entire kitchen and elevated the dining tables so guests have a front row stadium-like view of each step of the preparations. A chef's table concept where diners and staff are able to interact throughout the evening, channeling through a story guided by a 12 course menu."

"It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create."

Inspired by umami, one of the five basic tastes, and also Japanese for "essence of deliciousness", Chef Croes strived to organically produce this palate in each dish of the twelve-course Asian Caribbean Impression tasting menu. "It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create."

"Without a great team, there is no great chef"

"There is very little I can do by myself. Without a great team, there is no great chef", says Croes, while raving about the young professionals sharing his kitchen. All graduates of Aruba's EPI College and familiar faces to the Chef as each one has completed their culinary internship under his guidance. In fact, *Infini's* Chef de Cuisine, Ashwin Maduro, was Urvin's very first student, before relocating to Amsterdam, where he worked at several Michelin-starred restaurants, including &moshik (formally &Samhoud Places). Having recently returned to Aruba, Chef Maduro is thrilled to be reunited with his first mentor and hopes to secure Aruba's space on the global map of unique culinary experiences. Similarly, after four years working in the two-Michelin starred restaurant *Spectrum*, Chef de Partie Moises Ramirez returned home to share his vast experience in formulating recipes with meticulous attention to detail and consistency. Further down the kitchen line, Chef de Partie Alvaro Yi, who has worked at the two-Michelin starred FG Restaurant, is all about expressing himself through cooking and plating to create art that you can eat. Mixologist Marc-Anthony Rannis brings eight years of experience in the fine dining industry to *Infini*. His fine craftsmanship is displayed in the unparalleled wine pairings and signature cocktails, which include his personally homemade syrups, garnishes and fresh local ingredients. Maître D' and Junior



Sommelier Jessica Theysen, who previously managed renowned Chef Dennis Huwaë's Restaurant Daalder in Amsterdam, is a true storyteller. From the moment she serves the Salinity welcome drink and the culinary tale begins, she takes you on an adventure around the world to discover never-before-tasted combinations. Then, towards the end of the night, it is his time to shine — Pastry Chef Jean-Claude Werleman, that is. After spending the last two years perfecting his recipes in the Pastry Department of the Ritz Carlton Aruba, Werleman joins *Infini* to continue exploring his passion for experimenting with colors and bold flavors.

"It's time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own"

"The goal is to leave our visitors speechless. The look on their faces whenever they take the first bite says it all and it is priceless", shares Croes, with a smile. Reclaiming the spot of number one restaurant in the Caribbean is also in sight, but this time he will not stop there. "In the end, we want Aruba to be recognized for its culinary mastery. We have trained the best culinary artists right here on the island and they have proven themselves internationally in the most renowned kitchens in the world. Now it is time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own. Who knows where that will take us; hopefully to infinity and beyond."

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infini
by Urvin Croes

Infini located at Blue Residences currently serves an eight-course Chef's Impression to up to 21 guests starting at 6:30PM. To make reservations visit www.infiniaruba.com or call +297-699-3982. □

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**“Passenger Flow Control” at Check-in for US-Bound Passengers
 Adaptation of Check-in times and Introduction of a new Group Color Code as of June 24th**

<p>YELLOW Group Check-in 8:00 - 10:30</p> 	<p>BLUE Group Check-in 10:30 - 11:30</p> 	<p>GREEN Group Check-in 11:30 - 13:00</p> 	<p>ORANGE Group Check-in 13:00 - 15:00</p> 
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Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA), the company that manages and operates Aeropuerto Internacional Reina Beatrix (AUA Airport) hereby informs that as of June 24, 2022, all US departing passengers are allowed access to the US check-in terminal based on 4 groups and color codes at the airport as part of the “Passenger Flow Control”.

The color codes by groups for check-in are defined as follows:

- The YELLOW group has been adapted between 08:00 – 10:30 hrs. (8 AM – 10:30 AM).
- The BLUE group has been adapted between 10:30 and 11:30 hrs. (10:30 AM and 11:30 AM).
- The new GREEN group allows check-in between 11:30 – 13:00 hrs. (11:30 AM – 1 PM).
- The ORANGE group will remain between 13:00 - 15:00 hrs. (1 PM – 3 PM).

The Passenger Flow Control concept entails that passengers are allowed to enter the check in facilities based on separate groups (Yellow, Blue, Green, and Orange) established by the scheduled airline departure times. Passengers

will thus receive a dedicated time slot to enter the terminal as indicated in table below.

This dedicated timeslot is determined for visitors based on the information provided in the ED (Electronic Disembarkation) Card where information on the departure flight will also have to be submitted. Residents travelling out of Aruba to the US should take their scheduled departure time into account to determine at what time they are allowed to check-in (not earlier than 3 hours before scheduled departure time).


Passengers shall have their boarding passes on hand while entering the check-in areas as these will be verified by AUA Airport ambassadors at the entry doors to actively control the time slots per passenger. Early passengers will have to wait outside for their correct time slot.

AUA Airport would like to thank all passengers for their understanding as AUA Airport is trying to provide a better service for all departing passengers while undergoing the various check points at the airport. □

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Our Chuchubi

Etnia Nativa through Island Insight facilitates cultural awareness, education and safeguards Aruba's heritage by elevating each reader into an island keeper state of mind. Be encouraged to discover in every episode the true native effect, live it, discover more reasons to love Aruba behind our beaches and liven up your stay in an incredibly wonderful way.

Our island is a tiny tourist destination with a fragile ecosystem, covering thousands of years of history. Here is where Etnia Nativa's main objective comes to mind through educating the readers over Aruba's heritage. We believe in when you love and value what you have, ones greatest desire becomes to protect it.

During this episode we will share our growing concern regarding the Tropical Mockingbird's population. Even though it is the most abundant bird specie recorded on the island. The most direct threat it faces comes from other migrant birds which has decided to stay. These birds rely on others to raise their young. This strategy appears among brood parasite animals, in this case we call the Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*, the Giant Cowbird *Scaphidura oryzivora* and less than frequent the Cuckoo.

They manipulate their host, our Mockingbird, to raise their young as if it were its own, usually using egg mim-

icry, with eggs that resemble the host's. Most of the time these pirate eggs hatch faster and chicks and pushes out all rival "Chuchubi" hatchlings. Almost every morning in our garden we can witness how offspring of other birds begs and demands their surrogate mother, the Chuchubi, to feed. At times we see how the Chuchubi tries to fly away from the begging intruder.

In our language papiamentu, we call this smart tropical mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*) "Chuchubi", a resident breeding bird that you can find from Southern Mexico to Northern and Eastern South America, the Lesser Antilles and other Caribbean islands.

Adult tropical mockingbirds are 23 to 25.5 cm long. Adults are gray on the head and upperparts and have a whitish supercilium and a dark stripe through the eye. The underparts are off-white and the wings are blackish with two white wing bars and white edges to the flight feathers. They have a long dark tail with white feather tips, a slim black

bill with a slight downward curve, and long dark legs. Juveniles are browner and their chest and flanks have dusky streaks. Maybe you can spot one this curious specimen.

Chuchubi forages on the ground or low in vegetation; it also captures flying insects such as swarming termites on the wing. It is omnivorous; its diet includes a variety of arthropods (such as spiders, grasshoppers, and beetles), seeds, small fruits and berries, larger cultivated fruits (such as mangoes), cicadas, lizards, bird and lizard eggs, the contents of bird feeders, and human food.

The tropical mockingbird generally nests from late in the wet season through the transition period into the early wet season. During that long period it often will produce three broods. It is monogamous but cooperative breeding has been recorded with the young of the previous brood acting as helpers. It aggressively defends its territory against birds of its own and other species, and predatory animals as well. Both sexes build the nest using coarse twigs lined with softer material and place it low in a shrub or tree. The clutch size ranges from two to four but is usually three. The female does most of the incubation during the 13 to 15 day period. Chicks are fed by both parents (and helpers) in the nest for up to 19 days and beyond that after fledging.

Chuchubi's song is "a varied and long-continued sequence of diverse mellow to harsh notes, trills, with considerable repetition of phrases". It will often sing through the night. It apparently rarely mimics other species. Its calls include "a resonant 'pree-ew'" and "a harsh 'chick' or 'chek'". For the native Aruban believes, the Chuchubi is a messenger.

If you love Aruba interested in its origins and its cultural heritage, we invite you to be part of an exclusive visit at Etnia Nativa, an off the tourist grid, private residential houses sharing collections of native art, archaeological artifacts and historic furniture, while the facility itself is the result of the transforming and recycling of materials. Meet Anthony Croes, our columnist at his museum/ home. The only and authentic native Aruban cultural encounter! Live the experience. WhatsApp + 297 592 2702- or mail: etnianaativa03@gmail.com



U.S. charitable giving hit record in 2021 but inflation looms

By **THALIA BEATY** and **GLENN GAMBOA**
Associated Press

Charitable giving in the United States reached a record \$485 billion in 2021, though the increase did not keep pace with inflation, according to a report Tuesday offering a comprehensive look at American philanthropy.

The Giving USA report says donations in 2021 were 4% higher than the record-setting \$466 billion contributed in 2020. But they were down 0.7% when adjusted for inflation.

Many nonprofits are now feeling the strain because giving is not growing as fast as price increases, said Laura MacDonald, chair of the Giving USA Foundation. In response to the intense needs of the early COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the calls for racial justice, giving increased in unusual ways in 2020, but has generally returned to previous patterns.

"In 2021, many donors returned to their favored causes, with many of the sectors that struggled in 2020 making a recovery in 2021," MacDonald said in a statement.

The proportion of giving by individuals totaled less than 70% of overall giving for the fourth year in a row in 2021 and the report found that giving from individuals was essentially flat in 2021 when accounting for inflation, up 4.9% to \$327 billion. That's



A man walks past a portion of the archive wall at the Bob Dylan Center, Thursday, May 5, 2022, in Tulsa, Okla.

still not near the peak of 2017 when individuals donated about \$335 billion when adjusted for inflation. Experts say those totals contradict proponents of the Tax Cuts and Job Acts, which passed in 2017, who claimed the legislation would increase giving. "Everyday households are not participating in charitable giving to the extent that they did a decade or two ago," MacDonald said in an interview. "And that's concerning. That's troubling." She noted some large donors have transitioned to giving through donor-advised funds, a type of charitable investment account,

or family foundations and those donations would be counted in other categories.

Giving to arts and culture groups, which suffered during the pandemic, climbed 27.5% in 2021 to more than \$23.5 billion. Conversely, giving to education declined 2.8% to \$71 billion. It had spiked in 2020 in part because of donations related to vaccines which went to university affiliated hospitals and research.

"The environment for giving is evolving in multiple ways," said Amir Pasic, dean of Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, which researched and wrote the report published

by the Giving USA Foundation.

"Robust economic growth translated to strong performance by institutional forms of philanthropy such as foundations and corporations."

Corporate giving also raised questions. Though it increased 23.8% to \$21 billion in 2021, that was during a banner year for corporate profits, which were up 37% before taxes.

The report says corporate giving still represents less than 1% of corporate pre-tax profits.

However, the report finds that donations are generally strong.

Giving grew or stayed flat

in eight of the nine major philanthropic sectors, with only education declining.

"The growth that we see for the majority of the subsectors in 2021 is a reminder of the resilience and innovation that help to drive the philanthropic sector," said Una Osili, associate dean for research and international programs at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Giving to what the report categorizes as public benefit organizations, including civil rights and voting groups as well as donor advised funds, jumped 23.5% in 2021 from the previous year.

"Many of those organizations like the civil rights groups gained a lot of visibility and momentum during 2020 following the killing of George Floyd, and many of the new events that happened in 2021, like the Stop Asian Hate Movement, those also garnered a lot of support," Osili said.

The report draws on multiple data sets, including tax information, but does not capture person to person giving through crowdfunding campaigns or mutual aid groups, though it does reflect crowdsourced gifts to nonprofits.

Previous research by the Lilly Family School found that person to person giving is not yet replacing donations to charitable organizations, Osili said, but rather is in addition to those gifts. □

Luxury market seen as growing in 2022 despite inflation, war

MILAN (AP) — Neither inflation nor the war in Ukraine are threatening to take a bite out of the luxury fashion market, according to a study published Tuesday. While much of the world is fretting over higher fuel and energy prices, the study by Bain & Company consultancy indicated that the global luxury market remains set for growth, largely due to the continued resiliency of the world's wealthiest people. The global luxury market

grew by nearly one-third to 288 billion euros (\$198 billion) last year, rebounding from its worst recorded dip due to the 2020 pandemic lockdowns, according to the study commissioned by Italy's Altgamma association of high-end producers. Sales of personal luxury goods including apparel, accessories and footwear posted high double-digit growth in the first quarter of this year, despite the first signs of economic uncertainty tied to the Russian in-

vasion of Ukraine, Bain said. In its most pessimistic outlook, assuming global inflationary pressure, Bain forecasts growth in the sales of high-end personal goods this year to grow by 5% to around 305 billion euros. But the consultancy also sees a case for up to 15% growth if the current trends continue, pushing the market to 330 billion euros next year.

The United States and Europe have boosted growth so far this year, while sales



A model wears a creation as part of the Moschino men's Spring Summer 2023 collection presented in Milan, Italy, Sunday, June 19, 2022.

Associated Press

are expected to hit a hard stop in China due to CO-

VID-19 restrictions in key cities. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Excited

- 1 Scrub about
- 5 Parish leader 44 Most pleasant
- 11 Canyon sound 45 Come together
- 12 Horse-related

DOWN

- 13 Stage item 1 Cried
- 14 Didn't guzzle 2 Lot unit
- 15 Player's peg 3 Oxford application
- 16 Accomplishment 4 Little jump
- 17 Knitted wrap 5 Make fresh
- 19 Spoil 6 Matches
- 22 "Over There!" writer 7 Brusque
- 24 Teatime treat 8 Frank
- 26 Related 9 Counting start
- 27 Map region 10 Valentine color
- 28 Mountain group 16 Team backer
- 30 Seminar group 18 Put up
- 31 Tourney pass 19 Still output
- 32 Mocks 20 Poet
- 34 Phone message 21 Lively folk
- 35 Derby or boater 22 Diet no-no,
- 38 Famed Florentine family 23 Sanction for some student
- 41 "In — veritas" 25 Russian ruler
- 42 Tips off 29 Throws out
- 30 Sulky state
- 33 Be real
- 34 Bike part
- 36 Hand cost
- 37 Bender
- 38 Fellow
- 39 Yale
- 40 Last mo.
- 41 Lively spirit



Yesterday's answer

Cambodian catches world's largest recorded freshwater fish



In this photo provided by Wonders of the Mekong taken on June 14, 2022, a man touches a giant freshwater stingray before being released back into the Mekong River in the northeastern province of Stung Treng, Cambodia.

Associated Press

By JERRY HARMER

Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The world's largest recorded freshwater fish, a giant stingray, has been caught in the Mekong River in Cambodia, according to scientists from the Southeast Asian nation and the United States.

The stingray, captured on June 13, measured almost 4 meters (13 feet) from snout to tail and weighed slightly under 300 kilograms (660 pounds), according to a statement Monday by Wonders of the Mekong, a joint Cambodian-U.S. research project.

The previous record for a freshwater fish was a 293-kilogram (646-pound) Mekong giant catfish, discovered in Thailand in 2005, the group said.

The stingray was snagged by a local fisherman south of Stung Treng in northeastern Cambodia. The fisherman alerted a nearby team of scientists from the Wonders of the Mekong project, which has publicized its conservation work in communities along the river. The scientists arrived

within hours of getting a post-midnight call with the news, and were amazed at what they saw.

"Yeah, when you see a fish this size, especially in freshwater, it is hard to comprehend, so I think all of our team was stunned," Wonders of the Mekong leader Zeb Hogan said in an online interview from the University of Nevada in Reno. The university is partnering with the Cambodian Fisheries Administration and USAID, the U.S. government's international development agency. Freshwater fish are defined as those that spend their entire lives in freshwater, as opposed to giant marine species such as bluefin tuna and marlin, or fish that migrate between fresh and saltwater like the huge beluga sturgeon.

"The fact that the fish can still get this big is a hopeful sign for the Mekong River," Hogan said, noting that the waterway faces many environmental challenges. The Mekong River runs through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. It is home to several species

of giant freshwater fish but environmental pressures are rising. In particular, scientists fear a major program of dam building in recent years may be seriously disrupting spawning grounds.

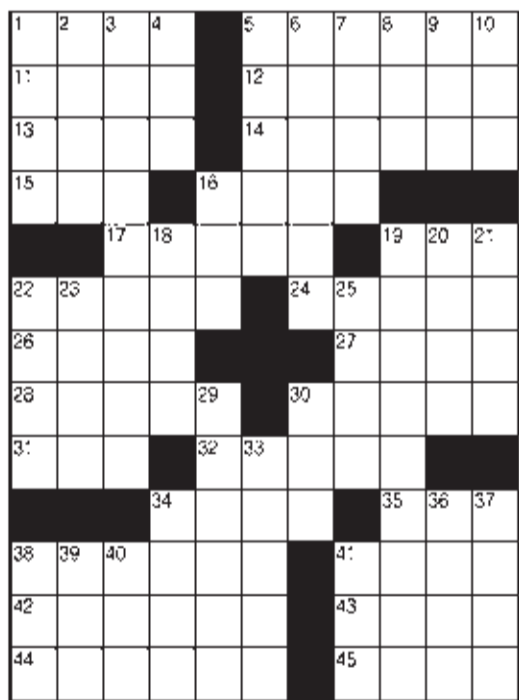
"Big fish globally are endangered. They're high-value species. They take a long time to mature. So if they're fished before they mature, they don't have a chance to reproduce," Hogan said. "A lot of these big fish are migratory, so they need large areas to survive. They're impacted by things like habitat fragmentation from dams, obviously impacted by overfishing. So about 70% of giant freshwater fish globally are threatened with extinction, and all of the Mekong species."

The team that rushed to the site inserted a tagging device near the tail of the mighty fish before releasing it. The device will send tracking information for the next year, providing unprecedented data on giant stingray behavior in Cambodia.

"The giant stingray is a very poorly understood fish. Its name, even its scientific name, has changed several times in the last 20 years," Hogan said. "It's found throughout Southeast Asia, but we have almost no information about it. We don't know about its life history. We don't know about its ecology, about its migration patterns."

Researchers say it's the fourth giant stingray reported in the same area in the past two months, all of them females. They think this may be a spawning hotspot for the species.

Local residents nicknamed the stingray "Boramy," or "full moon," because of its round shape and because the moon was on the horizon when it was freed on June 14. In addition to the honor of having caught the record-breaker, the lucky fisherman was compensated at market rate, meaning he received a payment of around \$600. □



6-22

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-22

CRYPTOQUOTE

S A F Z X P V I I Z F K S K A I E B

X V K D F Z K S I T R F K S P I V K D F

A X Y F Q F S S I X K L J X Z L

N E I S L P V

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I HAD THAT FAMILIAR CONVICTION THAT LIFE WAS BEGINNING OVER AGAIN WITH THE SUMMER. — F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

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'Elvis' and Austin Butler feel the temperature rising

By **JAKE COYLE**
AP Film Writer

On the day of Austin Butler's final screen test for "Elvis," director Baz Luhrmann threw everything at him.

Butler had spent five months building up to that moment, workshopping the role with Luhrmann, doing hair and make-up tests, rehearsing the songs. Against the odds, Butler had emerged as the unlikely favorite to land the role over more established names like Harry Styles, Miles Teller and Ansel Elgort. But it wasn't official yet. And during the screen test, Luhrmann flipped the script. Some of the scenes Butler had prepped went out the window. In others, Luhrmann fed him lines from behind the camera. The one minute of "Suspicious Minds" that Butler was to perform in a Presley jumpsuit stretched to six.

"I got home and I really thought: 'I don't think I got that. I felt like my hands were tied behind my back,'" Butler said in a recent interview.

A week later in Los Angeles, the 30-year-old actor's phone rang. Luhrmann was calling from Australia.

"I look at the phone and go, 'OK, this is the moment,'" says Butler. "I pick up the phone and he was very dramatic and downcast. He goes, 'Austin, I just wanted to be the first one to call you and say ... Are you ready to fly, Mr. Presley?'"

When "Elvis" opens in theaters Friday, it will resurrect one of the most iconic figures in American music in the biggest, most bedazzled film to ever try to capture the King of Rock 'n' Roll. And it will propel Butler, an Orange County, Calif., native best known to this point for playing Tex Watson in Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood," onto a far bigger stage.

"It all feels sort of like this wonderful dream," Butler said the morning after the film's Cannes Film Festival premiere. "I have to take moments to take a deep breath and say, 'This is real life.'" What's real and



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Austin Butler in a scene from "Elvis."

Associated Press

what's fake in the exaggerated land of the much-imitated Elvis hasn't always been easy to discern. "Elvis," which Luhrmann co-scripted, doesn't take a standard biopic view of Presley but tells his story through Presley's infamous manager, Col. Tom Parker (Tom Hanks), a former carnival barker who guided Presley to stardom but exploited and manipulated him until Presley's death in 1977. Parker narrates the tale, adding a dimension about the nature of show business and performance. "Baz in the very first meeting said, 'Look, this is a story about two people. There would have never been an Elvis without a Col. Tom Parker, and, in his own mind, there would have never been a Col. Tom Parker without Elvis,'" says Hanks. "As soon as he said that, I thought, 'Well, this is going to be new turf, and worthy of the Baz-maximalist-confetti-strewn style of moviemaking.'"

And, like "The Great Gatsby" and "Moulin Rouge," "Elvis" is indeed an extravagant, maximalist Baz-styled blow-out. As you'd expect, it breezes through pivotal moments in the Mississippi-born Memphis singer's life and a jukebox

of songs. But "Elvis" also offers a more youthful, rebellious portrait of Presley as a product of Black gospel music, a hip-shaking sex symbol in eyeliner and a progressive-minded non-conformist whose closely controlled career reflected cultural battles of then and now. Butler's is an electric Elvis, not campy nostalgia act, with more Bowie in him than you might expect.

"I'm not here to tell the world that Elvis is a great person. I'll tell you what he is for me," says Luhrmann. "Everyone has their Elvis."

"My job generally is to take things that are considered either boring or old-fashioned or not relevant and shake off the rust, and recode them" says Luhrmann, maker of the modern-day "Romeo + Juliet." "Not to change them, just to retranslate them so their value is once again present."

Presley's value to contemporary audiences, while still beyond most of his contemporaries, has faded somewhat. To many, he represents the appropriation of Black music. Some relatively recent productions — the 2005 Broadway musical "All Shook Up," Cirque du Soleil's Viva Elvis show in Las Vegas — failed

to catch on substantially.

All of which meant that Butler had a lot riding on his shoulders. For him, it was essential to find ways to make Presley more human than superhuman. One resonant connection for the actor was learning that Presley's mother died when he was 23, the same age Butler was when he lost his mom. And like Presley, an initially timid performer, Butler grew up shy.

"I could then go: 'When I feel afraid and I feel like all the pressure's on me and I'm terrified of falling on my face, he felt those things,'" says Butler. "So then I could go: 'It's OK to feel the fear. It's how you channel it.'"

"Elvis" is most moving in its second half, in the Vegas section of the film, when Presley was often reaching artistic highs on stage during his 1969-1976 run at the International Hotel but was increasingly trapped by Parker (who refused to tour Presley internationally) and drug use. Priscilla Presley, who has enthusiastically supported the film, is played by Olivia DeJonge. "A lot of the characters in this film are larger-than-life, and authentically larger than life," says DeJonge. "With Priscilla, I wanted to make sure she felt ground-

ed and more like Elvis' breath so that whenever he's with her, he's relaxed." Before "Elvis" began shooting in Memphis, Hanks had dinner with Priscilla Presley, who then described her ex-husband as "an artist as unique as Picasso and as popular as Charlie Chaplin that really only felt truly himself and at home when he was singing." While a more villainous role represents a rare departure for Hanks — who tested positive for coronavirus during the film's Australia shoot, an indelible early pandemic moment — "Elvis" is also typical for the actor in that it grapples with American history and exists as a standalone drama. "Elvis" will be competing primarily with franchise installments in theaters this summer.

"The concept of franchise now is so much a part of the entertainment industrial complex that for me, I just don't think it's very fun," says Hanks. "Everybody knows that I've been doing this for an awfully long time so I think they're going to have just as much faith that they'll get all three acts out of me, and then they'll decide if it was worth seeing or not."

Reviews have been largely positive for "Elvis," but they've been glowing for Butler. (In the film, he sings some songs while Presley's voice is used in others.) The actor reckons he devoted two years of his life to the film, obsessively researching Presley and gradually transforming into him. Butler went through daily routines wondering how Presley did them. When the movie wrapped, Butler struggled to let go.

"Suddenly it was me brushing my teeth, now it's me doing these mundane things. It was a real existential crisis when I finished," says Butler. "The next morning, I woke up and I couldn't walk. I thought my appendix burst. It was the most excruciating pain in my stomach, so they took me to the emergency room. It's wild how your body can kind of hold on for the duration of doing something." □

Rob Gronkowski retires, won't join Tom Brady for 3rd season

By ROB MAADDI

AP Pro Football Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Rob Gronkowski won't be joining Tom Brady for a third season with the Buccaneers.

The four-time All-Pro tight end announced his retirement for the second time in three years on Tuesday. In an Instagram post, Gronkowski thanked his teammates and coaches over the years and said he's going back to "chilling out." Gronkowski won four Super Bowls with Brady, including three in New England.

"I want to thank the whole entire first class Buccaneers organization for an amazing ride, trusting me to come back to play and help build a championship team," Gronkowski wrote on Instagram. "I will now be going back into my retirement home, walking away from football again with my head held high knowing I gave it everything I had, good or bad, every time I stepped out on the field. The friendships and relationships I have made will last forever, and I appreciate every single one of my teammates and coaches



Tampa Bay Buccaneers tight end Rob Gronkowski (87) waves to fans after an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021, in Atlanta.

for giving everything they had as well."

The 33-year-old retired in 2019 after nine seasons with the Patriots, but returned in 2020 when Brady went to the Buccaneers. The close friends teamed up to help Tampa beat the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl in February 2021. Gronkowski caught two touchdown passes in that game.

"Love you as a man, teammate and friend," Brady wrote on Gronkowski's post. "One of a kind in every way."

The Buccaneers and Brady were hoping Gronkowski would play another season. But Tampa prepared for his departure in the draft by selecting tight ends Cade Otton in the fourth round and Ko Kieft in the sixth round. Veteran tight end Camer-

on Brate also remains with the Buccaneers.

"Rob is a true professional who left it all on the field for us the past two seasons and helped establish a championship culture in our building," Buccaneers general manager Jason Licht said in a statement. "It is always difficult to see a great player walk away from the game when he is still enjoying that kind of success, but

Associated Press

the overwhelming emotions I feel today are gratitude and respect for one of the greatest tight ends who ever played the game."

The fun-loving Gronkowski will be tough to replace. He was not only one of the league's best pass-catching tight ends but also among the best blockers at his position. Gronk was known for his toughness, playing physical and through injuries.

His jovial personality made him one of the league's most popular players and a natural for a broadcasting job.

Gronkowski's agent, Drew Rosenhaus, told ESPN it wouldn't surprise him if Brady called and talked him out of retirement at some point during the season. Brady himself ended a 40-day retirement in March to play his 23rd season. But for now, Gronk has spiked his last football in an NFL game.

He ends his career — again — with 621 catches for 9,286 yards and 92 touchdowns in the regular season. He had 98 receptions for 1,389 yards and 15 TDs in the postseason. □

Serena Williams wins 1st match of comeback after year away

EASTBOURNE, England (AP) — As "What A Feeling" boomed around Devonshire Park, Serena Williams strode onto center court at Eastbourne to a standing ovation for her first competitive tennis match in nearly a year.

Around 90 minutes later, fans were on their feet again, celebrating a comeback win for the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion at the Wimbledon warmup event on England's south coast.

Williams partnered Ons Jabeur to victory over Sara Sorribes Tormo and Marie Bouzkova in the first round of the women's doubles. Williams and Jabeur recovered from losing the first set 6-2 to win the second 6-3 and then the match tiebreaker 13-11 on their

third match point. The win means Williams will have at least one more competitive match before playing singles at Wimbledon as a wild-card entry.

Main-draw play at the All England Club starts Monday.

It was at the grass-court Slam where Williams was last seen in competitive action in 2021. She was playing in the first round when she lost her footing and her right leg buckled, leading to Williams retiring from the match.

With no competitive activity since then, she is ranked No. 1,204 in singles and wasn't among the seeded players announced by Wimbledon on Tuesday. Few will want to face her when the draw is made Friday.

Williams — sporting three black patches on her right cheek — made a slow start to the match alongside Jabeur that marked her third appearance at Eastbourne, having previously played in the singles event in 1998 and 2011.

She served first — her opening serve was timed at 90 mph (145 kph) and earned the first point after Sorribes Tormo's reply sailed long — and held to 30.

Williams struggled at times in the first set, and was exasperated after she was unable to get low enough to a shot by Sorribes Tormo. It took 25 minutes before Williams hit a winner as her smash flew into the North Stand, ensuring one spectator was able to leave with a souvenir.

Williams' agility improved



Serena Williams of the United States celebrates after scoring a point during their doubles tennis match with Ons Jabeur of Tunisia against Marie Bouzkova of Czech Republic and Sara Sorribes Tormo of Spain at the Eastbourne International tennis tournament in Eastbourne, England, Tuesday, June 21, 2022.

Associated Press

noticeably in the second set, though there were audible gasps from the crowd when she slipped rushing into the net.

She set up a set point with a backhand winner from the baseline and took the match to a tiebreaker with

a 102 mph ace.

Williams showed desire to dive to her right to make a volley which could not be returned that set up one of the three match points. The win was clinched when Sorribes Tormo miscued a volley. □

MLB standardizing ball rubbing and removal from humidors

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball is standardizing procedures for rubbing baseballs and their removal from humidors in an effort to establish more consistency amid complaints about slickness that followed the crackdown on sticky substances.

MLB has been working on standards over the course of the season in response to feedback from players and sent a memorandum outlining the changes on Tuesday to general managers, assistant GMs and clubhouse managers. Titled "Updates to Baseball Storage & Handling," a copy of the memo was obtained by The Associated Press.

Scrutiny of baseball preparation — a minimum 13 dozen are readied for each game — has increased in recent years. Use of a humidor, began by Colorado in 2002, expanded to Arizona in 2019, three additional teams in 2020, then a total of 10 last year and all 30 this season.

MLB is mandating a ball be stored in a humidor for at least 14 days before game use, and ball storage must be recorded by the home team's gameday compliance monitor and then certified in a signed form by the clubhouse manager.

"All baseballs projected to be used in a specific



Baseballs are held in a basket on the field before a baseball game between the Cincinnati Reds and the Milwaukee Brewers in Cincinnati, Sunday, July 18, 2021.

game must be mudded within three hours of all other baseballs being used in that game, and must be mudded on the same day that they are going to be used," the memo states. "Baseballs should not be out of the humidor for more than two hours at any point prior to first pitch, and if it will take club staff longer than two hours, the baseballs should be pulled out of the humidor in smaller batches."

The memo followed review of video of each team's rubbing procedures.

MLB is instructing that "each club staff member involved

in the process should apply mud in a uniform manner ensuring the same mud-to-water ratio is applied to each ball. Rubbing mud should be applied to each baseball for at least 30 seconds, ensuring that mud is rubbed thoroughly and consistently into the entire leather surface of the ball." After rubbing, balls are to be put back in Rawlings boxes, with dividers between each, and returned to the humidor until the home team's gameday compliance monitors gets them for game use. In an effort to reduce time in ball bags, balls are to be

taken from the humidor 15-30 minutes before the scheduled start, and then no more than 96 balls at a time.

When needed, up to 96 more balls may be taken from the humidor, and they should not be mixed in bags with balls from the earlier bunch. A bag must be cleaned with a damp cloth and then a dry cloth before it is used "to make sure there is no excess residue, dust or moisture."

Following a crackdown on use of sticky substances as grip aides last June 21, New York Mets pitcher Chris Bassitt complained about the

baseballs in April and Los Angeles Angels pitcher Michael Lorenzen last weekend after a pitch he threw hit Seattle's Justin Upton in the head.

Bassitt was angry after Mets batters were hit by pitches 19 times in their first 20 games.

Mets batters were hit 50 times entering Tuesday, on pace to finish with 117 — which would break the record of 105 set by Cincinnati last season.

Yet overall, hit batters are averaging 0.40 per team per game, down from 0.43 last year and 0.46 during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, which was the most since a record high 0.47 in 1899.

Commissioner Rob Manfred was pleased with the impact of the crackdown on sticky substances. Speaking at last year's All-Star Game, he called it "a step along the road to a return to a more entertaining form of baseball."

"The process has already shown very promising effects in terms of the play of the game on the field," he said. "Batting average, slugging percentage, all those offensive categories have improved. Strikeouts are down, base on balls are down. We have not seen any material increase in players being hit by pitches. Those are all huge positives for us." □

Associated Press



Kristof Milak of Hungary competes in the Men 200m Butterfly final at the 19th FINA World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, Tuesday, June 21, 2022.

Associated Press

By **CIARÁN FAHEY**
AP Sports Writer

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's Kristóf Milák thrilled home fans by low-

ering his own world record in the men's 200 butterfly at the swimming world championships on Tuesday, when American swimmers

Milák sets world record; 3 more US golds at swimming worlds

claimed another three gold medals. The 22-year-old Milák produced a stunning swim to clock 1 minute, 50.34 seconds and earn Hungary its first gold medal of the competition. "Now it hurts a lot, I don't feel my legs," said Milák, who shaved 0.39 seconds off the previous record he set at the last worlds. "I think I pushed a bit harder over the first 100 meters, that's why it was so painful at the end but I really wanted this world record, wanted it more than anything." Milák was 3.03 quicker than Léon

Marchand, who improved on the French record he set in the semifinals. Japan's Tomoru Honda was third. The 20-year-old Marchand later set another national record of 1:55.75 as he was fastest in the semifinals of the men's 200 individual medley. "Two great times today!" Marchand said. American swimmer Bobby Finke also set a national record of 7:39.36 as he produced a sizzling finish to win the first gold of the evening in the men's 800 freestyle. "I was just thinking in my head it is just a 50 left. It is

only like 26 seconds of pain and if I can pull off a win, it is worth it. I'll settle through the pain," Finke said.

Third-place Romanchuk finished just 0.69 seconds behind. He nearly didn't make it to Budapest and spoke afterward about his father fighting in Ukraine.

China's Yang Junxuan won the women's 200 freestyle, clocking 1:54.92 to finish just ahead of Australia's Mollie O'Callaghan, who claimed her first individual medal at a worlds. Another Chinese swimmer, Tang Muhan, was third. □